

West Virginia, and Robert Mauk of Huntington, chairman and founding member of CALA of Southern West Virginia. Many others have given their time and energy to these public watchdog groups as well, persons such as Sid Davis of Charleston who, despite having to take time off recently for health reasons, has returned to his volunteer position as an officer of CALA of Southern West Virginia.

Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse groups have declared September 21 through September 27, 1997, to be Lawsuit Abuse Awareness Week in West Virginia. I commend all of the individuals who are involved in Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse for their involvement in civic affairs and their efforts to promote constructive action in a policy area they care about.

As someone who has been a leader for a balanced, responsible form of product liability reform, I continue to hope for the kind of education, dialogue, and consensus-building clearly needed to address problems in our legal system that hurt consumers, victims, and the private sector. I encourage CALA to continue raising these issues and promoting solutions that ensure justice and improve the legal system. West Virginia and the country as a whole need informed, educated, and dedicated citizens to help elected officials address serious issues and achieve proper reforms when necessary.●

#### RIGHT TO LIFE OF MICHIGAN

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to honor those of Right to Life of Livingston County, Inc. and Right to Life of Michigan for their enduring commitment and dedication to one of today's most important social issues.

Mr. President, to those of us who are pro-life, being pro-life means protecting our families and respecting the sanctity of life. It also means maintaining the central role of the family in all our lives. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those of Right to Life of Michigan for their perseverance in support of those goals. Unfortunately, we still must spend much of our time in the political sphere, arguing against laws that promote the taking of unborn human lives, and I am grateful for all their efforts in that area as well.

Ending the tragedy of abortion will not be easy. But groups like Right to Life of Livingston County, National Right to Life of Michigan, and the National Right to Life Committee, are fighting a winning battle. By their example, as well as their arguments, they are showing the power and the beauty of human life.●

● Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, retinal degenerative diseases affect more than six million Americans. This number is expected to climb beyond 10 million as the baby boomers age. This is a vision timebomb and I have witnessed its devastating impact on many of our senior citizens. September 27, 1997 marks World Retina Day, a day in which organizations around the world dedicated

to finding the cures for retinal degenerative diseases join together to call attention to the collaborative research that is being done internationally.

The most common retinal disease is age-related macular degeneration (AMD) which is the leading cause of vision loss in adults over the age of 60. Individuals with AMD not only lose their central vision, but also their ability to read, drive and in many cases they lose their sense of independence. Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) is a genetic disease that steals the sight of the young, robbing them in the prime of their life, their night vision and then their peripheral vision. RP is a progressive disease, leading in most cases to blindness. There is no treatment to stop the progression of this disease. Usher's Syndrome is also a genetic disease and it is the leading cause of deaf-blindness in the United States. This again shows up in our young, robbing them of vision and hearing. The suffering to the patients and their families is incalculable.

Due to the work funded by the National Eye Institute at the National Institute of Health, and organizations such as the Foundation Fighting Blindness and similar organizations worldwide, significant progress in research has been made. Just this past week a stunning research breakthrough was announced. Scientists have discovered gene mutations that cause AMD. This landmark finding offers the first concrete evidence that AMD is genetically linked. There is now hope that by the time the generation of the baby boomers reaches age 60, in about 10 years, that there will be a genetic treatment for AMD. If a treatment is found, we will see a return on our investments in eye research, and the savings to the budget in terms of health care costs will be significant.

With the international collaboration among researchers who represent a broad spectrum of highly specialized scientific disciplines, great strides have been made in understanding AMD, RP, Usher's syndrome and related retinal degenerative diseases. International breakthroughs and collaboration in research warrant the recognition of World Retina Day. I am hopeful that there is a cure in sight. I believe that as we continue to fund medical research, diseases such as these will become eradicated and remembered only in the archives of medical history.●

#### TRIBUTE TO SOUTHWEST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

● Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I stand before you today to pay tribute to a truly outstanding University in my home State of Missouri, Southwest Missouri State University (SMSU). SMSU was one of 135 schools in 42 states selected to the John Templeton Foundation Honor Roll, "a designation recognizing colleges and universities that emphasize character building as an integral part of the college experience."

Being the only public institution in Missouri to earn the 1997-98 Honor Roll

distinction, SMSU is also one of the eight state-funded schools to receive the award nationwide. Schools competing for the Honor Roll were judged on five criteria and out of 2,208 four-year accredited undergraduate institutions only the top few were chosen. One of the categories where SMSU stood out was in community service. During the 1996-97 school year the SMSU campus, including the faculty and students, volunteered more than 69,500 hours.

It is an honor for the entire State of Missouri to have a University like SMSU, whose service and character-building programs have earned it this distinguished award. I commend SMSU's President, Dr. John Kaiser, for his commitment to excellence and hope for continued success in the future.●

#### JUDGE ROBERT AND HELENE BRANG GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Judge Robert and Helene Brang on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary. A long and successful marriage is truly a cause for celebration, well worthy of recognition by the United States Senate. Their commitment to each other and their family is commendable and a great contribution to the tradition of strong American families.

Robert Francis Brang and Helene Marie Foley met at the University of Detroit while both were students. Helene was a reporter for the Varsity News and Bob was the President of the Student Union. They met on the steps of the Commerce and Finance Building when Helene approached him for an interview.

They were married at St. Scholastica's Catholic Church in Detroit on October 4, 1947. In 1956, Robert and Helene moved their growing family from their home in Detroit to Redford Township where they reside to this day. Bob practiced law and Helene reared 8 wonderful children. In 1968, Bob was elected a Judge for the 17th District Court and retained that position until his retirement.

Mr. President, on October 4, Robert and Helene will have celebrated fifty years together. Their children—Kathleen, Robert, Mary, William, Barry, Stephen, Daniel, and Patrick—along with their twelve grandchildren—Diana, Laura, Rob, Patrick, Amy, Beth, Adam, Kellie, Sarah, Kaitlyn, Dakota, and Austin—will join with them in celebration.

Martin Luther once wrote: "There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage." Robert and Helene are blessed to enjoy such a strong and enduring bond. On behalf of the United States Senate, I wish them a happy anniversary and many more years of joy.●